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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to identify and evaluate the most obvious marital anxieties of elementary and secondary public school teachers as a result of their occupation, and to develop a stress inventory to aid in the professional counseling and guidance of married teachers employed in the Chicago Public Schools. In particular, the study sought to determine the psychological-occupational concerns of elementary and secondary public school teachers, and to construct a Likert-type scale based on items from the Teacher Concerns Inventory (TCI) and the Abbreviated Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). The population sample included 48 elementary and secondary public school teachers in the Chicago Public School system who were administered the TCI and MSI. Results revealed a significant but low correlation between occupational stress and marital stress among the participants. (Contains 10 references.) (JB)

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A STUDY TO EVALUATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL AND MARITAL STRESS AMONG TEACHERS IN THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, AND TO DEVELOP A TEACHER OCCUPATIONAL-MARITAL STRESS INVENTORY SCALE (TOMSIS)

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MARITAL AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF TEACHERS

This study was conducted to identify and evaluate the most obvious marital anxieties of elementary and secondary public school teachers as a result of their occupation, and to develop a Teacher Occupational-Marital Stress Inventory based on selected items from the Marital Satisfaction and Teacher Stress inventories to aid in the professional counseling and guidance of married teachers in the employment of the Chicago Public Schools.

The history of the occupational and marital stresses of elementary and secondary public school teachers can very well be said to have no individual history, though there have been many sub-histories. But, because of the overwhelming amount of emotional, psychological, and professional stresses to which teachers of the 90s are being subjected, there is a psychologically obvious need for an inventory(ies) which will gauge the particular amount(s) of stress under which teachers are working and, for the purposes of our study, its influence upon their marital and domestic relations.

More specifically, because of the tremendous psychological, emotional, and academic pressures on teachers, particularly in their role of in loco parentis, the concern for the toll it takes on their emotional lives at home should be of obvious psychological concern to the marital counselor or psychological professional. There is a dire paucity of literature on the correlation between the occupational

and marital stresses of teachers. But, the most proximal study we execute is, at best, prefaced with an examination of the histories of similar studies.

McGrath (1970) says that stress is the individual's perceived response to demand. If that person does not have the individual resources to meet the demand, that demand is perceived as a stressor. The first marital satisfaction inventory was developed in 1982, designed to be administered to adults who are married or have been living together for at least six months. This consists of 280 true-false items with one validity scale (CNV), a Global Distress Scale (GDS), and nine additional scales including Affective Communication (AFC), Problem Solving Communication (PSC), Time Together (TTO), Disagreement About Finances (FIN), Sexual Satisfaction (SEX), Role Orientation (ROR), Conflict over Child Rearing (CCR),

The author of the MSI is Douglas K. Snyder, and the construction, as well as the validation, was the subject of his doctoral dissertation (Snyder, 1978). Snyder and his associates continued research on the MSI (Snyder, Willis and Keiser, 1981). They also affirmed the existence of two additional factor scales: Disaffection and Disharmony. But, in addition to the work of Snyder, our research also included the TSI (now called the TCI) or Teacher Concerns Inventory.

The Teacher Concerns Inventory (TCI) was first developed in 1988 (TSI, Fimian, 1988) to assess the degree of occupational stress experienced by teachers in the employment of the public schools. The test consists of 49 items divided into ten factors that comprise some elements of teacher stress. There are

five principal stress sources: 1) Time Management, 2) Work Related Stress, 3) Professional Distress, 4) Discipline and Motivation, and 5) Professional Investment. The other categories include five stress manifestations: 1) Emotional, 2) Fatigue, 3) Cardiovascular, 4) Gastronomic, and 5) Behavioral. The TCI scores serve three purposes. The primary purpose is the assessment of individual teacher stress levels in the workshop and school setting, and the assessment of stress on a school district or statewide basis.

The TCI's initial development began in 1979. The original form of the test, with 63 items and a five-point Likert-type scale, was administered in a northeastern state to 365 special education teachers. The second version, containing 41 items, was also administered to regular and special education teachers. Modifications on the 1982 test included eight more time management items. But, neither of the tests deal psychologically or specifically with the marital stresses of teachers as a by-product of their occupation. According to Test Critiques (1986), the validity of the MSI is tremendously indebted to the work of its author, is more relationship specific, and focuses on marital interaction rather than mere personalities when compared with the MEC (Marital Evaluation Checklist). Consonant with findings on the MSI, but not completely on par with the MSI, the TCI is still in need of further development. One of these developments can and should be a Teacher Occupational-Marital Stress Inventory. However, one of the weaknesses of the TCI is that it does not use split-half or alternate forms of reliability. Insignificant r's could very well affect its generalizability (Fimian and Gastenau, 1987).

Secondly, certain of the TCI variables, in addition to being a somewhat limited sample size, came from two different settings; that is, from survey and workshop formats. There is no indication what setting provided what data for what percent of time.

Other studies, particularly Schumm and Hammond (1986), while dealing with other populations, gauged some notable results using MCS (Marital Conventionalization Scale), (Marital Communications Inventory) and Box's M Test (a dyadic scale for measuring relationships) reported from a sample of 212 military wives (from a population of 35,000) that the covariance matrices were equivalent (M = 26.6, S.D. = 3.1), and in comparison to student's husbands, they reported (M = 26.8, S.D. = 2.1) significantly higher emotional intimacy than did the other group (M = 22.2, S.D. = 4.1). For husbands, the discriminant functions were loaded heavily on emotional intimacy (-.57) and was significant ($p > .020$). Schumm and Hammond (1986) also reported that there were no significant differences in any variable of any discriminant function in the low social desirability group. Results do not support any notion that the military families are necessarily dysfunctional in terms of the standard self-reporting measures, at least relative to the civilian communities in which they may be residing. But Schumm and Hammond, while using both valid and reliable marital inventories, have fallen short of the question, or the teacher's question, concerning the correlation between occupational and marital stress. Schumm and Hammond's findings are significant

in relationship to our study because of procedural possibilities inherent in the use of the MCS and MCI Scales.

Wilson, Mutero and Herastein (1990), in a study of type A behavior and self-reported stress among Zimbabwean teachers, concluded that sex differences had a significant bearing on stress among Zimbabwean teachers. Again, this study stopped short of any detailed assessment of how stress affected the marriages of the particular set of teachers in question. Fimian (1986), in a study of six statewide samples of stress among teachers, found internal consistencies of .89 to .95 for teachers. Fimian, 1984, 1985; McHardy, 1983; and Zacherman, 1984 established consistencies of .89 to .92 in a study which included teacher trainees. While these studies do not deal either specifically or psychologically with the marital results of teacher occupational stress, they suggested some rather interesting occupational inventories upon which our current study could build and modify. Again, Fimian (1986) found the TCI (Teacher Concerns Inventory) a reliable 49-item measurement of six stress factors for public school teachers, rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Estimates for the subscales internal consistencies ranged from .77 to .89 and .95. Alphas for short forms A and B ranged from .83 to .89. Initial factorial content and construct validities were established using TCI. Again, Fimian's study stopped short of dealing with the significant details of marital stress, particularly that of inner city public school teachers. While its generalizability was supposed to apply to all people, practices and professions,

its lack of professional specific generalizability left us with no data about distinct domestic pressures on teachers at home by way of their job.

Gmelch, Wilke and Lovrich (1986) established the fact that, within gender comparisons of married and unmarried university faculties, there is no difference in levels of perceived stress save time constraints and professional identity. Koester and Clark (1980) found that separate dimensions of stress are affected by marital status. The authors found that married women had more committee appointments, less professional reading time, and were more likely to report a lack of support for their research than their single female colleagues. Additional considerations said to account for factors 1-5 are the fact that women have a greater responsibility for family tasks, which limits their involvement in professional activities. This study, however, does not get to the root of the issue nor to the question of the marital issue of occupational stress among teachers. However, a much more incisive study by Kuinnen (1988), a much more involved longitudinal study, comes closer to the data, both appropriate and relevant to what we are endeavoring to ascertain in our study. Based on questionnaires and data collected six times during the autumn term (1983), Kuinnen was able to pinpoint much of the stress which is closer to home or the teacher's home.

Measurements taken during the beginning, the middle and the end of the term (three) represented weekends; the other three, workdays. The number of participants in the experiment were 142 teachers in primary, lower and upper secondary schools in (5) municipalities. Sixty-three percent were female (90) and

37% (52) were male. Forty-three percent (61) were teachers in grades 1-6, 32% (46) taught grades 7-9 and 25% (35) taught grades 10-12. The average age was 44 years, the S.D. was 7.0. Ages were between 25-49 years. The average teaching experience was 19 years with an S.D. of 7.2 years, and a range of 2-34 years. Forty-seven percent (66) of the teachers were from a city of 180,000 inhabitants, 32% (46) were from a city of 70,000 and 21% (3) were from rural municipalities of 3,000,000.

Repeated measurements of stress indicators were obtained by means of questions formulated separately from the weekday/weekend measurements. Stress was assessed on a set of eight 5-point rating scales of subject's mood and physical condition during the present school week. Based on reliability coefficients for the revised scales, a score for feelings of stress was computed by rating six variables: 1) Depression, 2) Distress, 3) Irritability, 4) Helplessness, 5) Exhaustion and 6) Anxiety. Based on Kuinnen's findings (1988), it was concluded that the amount of work, the quality of interpersonal relations at school with pupils and colleagues, as well as life at home with the family, were at best measured by the LISREL (Linear Structured Relations) Analysis Models as used in this study (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1981). Kyriacou and Sutcliff (1978), Makinen (1982), Tellenbach, et al. (1983), Mykeltom (1985), Blase (1986), Tokar and Feitler (1986) showed by their research that the origins of stress were (a) difficult classes, (b) noisy pupils, (c) time pressures, (d) too much work, (e) working conditions and inadequacies in the work environment, and (f) the societal status of the

profession as well as a poor ethos. Social relations variables, pupil motivation, pupil behavior and colleague relations based on a subject's global rating of variables were analyzed during the preceding school week. Ratings of home relations were given concerning the present school week as "the present weekend" on the scale of 1-4. The amount of work, according to the research, did not have a significant effect on teacher stress. Relations with colleagues was an important stressor on the first workday measurements. Its effect afterwards was not significant.

In two other workday measurements later in the autumn term, pupil relations proved significant contributors to the observed stress among teachers; however, the quality of home relations was the most important origin of stress. But, for the purposes of our study, we want to modify the original instruments to delve further into the effects of occupational stress on home/marital relations. According to the weekend measurement, the home atmosphere was variable and significantly associated with the experienced stress; the worse the atmosphere, the more the stress. In addition, in November the quality of pupil relations (declining motivation and conduct problems) predicted stress to some extent. The ratings of pupil relations were predictors of the rate of teacher stress. These measurements also included one weekend measurement. This is of specific relevance to our study because the weekend rating of the quality of social relations at home were made by reference to "last week's." This means that the teachers could not get rid of their worries during the weekend in November.

These stressors were responsible for 16-30% of the variance in self-reported stress. One time predictive regression models show that home atmosphere had a small but predictive value in explaining stress from the beginning to the end of the term in the above study. From the third to the fifth measurement, from the middle of October to the beginning of December, the home relations proved to have the most significant effect on teacher stress on every measurement occasion on both workday and weekend measurements. Stress also had significant origins outside the working life. Another was the feeling of stress reflected in the home atmosphere.

In yet another study, Sigler and Wilson (1988), using the Holmes-Rahe Social Readjustment Scale (1967) composed of 14 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale, compared occupational stress among policemen to that of teachers. But, again, like all the previous studies mentioned, Sigler and Wilson's study does not do justice to the effect of stress upon the marriages of either teachers or policemen. The purpose of our study will be to determine the psychologico-occupational concerns of elementary and secondary public school teachers, and to construct a Likert-type scale based on items from the TCI (Teacher Concerns Inventory) and the AMSI (Abbreviated Marital Stress Inventory). Our express objective will be to test a theoretical correlation between the stress that is variously associated with the routine of teachers and the effect of the stresses of this routine upon the marital relations of public school teachers. Although most of the marital and occupational scales which we have been discussing still call for

modification, they are excellent tools, instruments for assessing the occupational and marital stress of public school teachers in our high-speed, stress-laden schools where they are called upon to act as professional and academic parents. Recognizing the stress and anxiety that goes with this almost national responsibility is significant if we are to understand teachers and the human side of education. The demands made upon teachers, not only in loco parentis but also in their own homes, can figure prominently in administrative and human services decisions of the school if the material under study is well understood. While there is a paucity of literature on this aspect of the teaching profession, the paucity of research that we have thus far studied serve to reveal what initially was only a suspicion: that there is an acknowledged relationship between levels of occupational and marital stress,, and those who intend to enter or remain among the ranks of the profession should enter in as informed heads not only of their open classrooms, but also of their own households. Therefore, there is a need to determine the correlation between the levels of occupational and marital stress among elementary and secondary public school teachers.

The population sample included 48 elementary and secondary public school teachers. The Teacher Concerns Inventory (TCI) and the Marital Stress Inventory (MSI) were administered to the population sample. The results were tabulated in terms of means and standard deviations, and the Pearson-Product-Moment Coefficient was employed at the.05 level of confidence to determine the statistical significance of the correlation.

Findings of the Study

The sample for the study included Chicago elementary and secondary teachers. The results are reported in Table I. The results on the TCI and AMSI indicated a significant, but low correlation. Although there was a low correlation between occupational stress and marital stress among elementary and secondary public school teachers, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table I

Occupational-Marital Stress Among

Elementary and Secondary Public School Teachers.

Statistic	Value	S.D.	Mean of Scores
N	48		
DX_1	40.88	100.72	2.27
DX_2	50.36	150.95	2.80
DXY	111.61		
Pearson's R	0.32		
Df	16		

However, the findings of the current study may have been influenced by the sampling bias (available sample), sample size, validity and reliability of the instruments, lack of frankness on the part of the sample and may have been prejudiced by certain questions (e.g., "victims of the system"). Although the correlation was low (.32) but significant at the .05 level, the findings appear to indicate there is a level of stress. Whether marital stress impacts occupational stress or the other way around is difficult to determine.

Additional research is needed to determine which extraneous variables, e.g., salary, age, job (elementary or secondary), location of school, family structure, teaching experience, school climate, etc. have the greatest impact. Also, the selection of a larger population/sample may increase the size of the correlation.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study appear to be similar to those of Sigler and Wilson (1988) who undertook a much more intensive study, which was all but duplicated in this research. This was a comparison of police stress and teacher stress. Their particular and psychological emphasis was burnout.

In order to compare police officers with teachers on a number of variables related to stress, a structured questionnaire was distributed in all work places of teachers and policemen in Dewitt, New York. The questionnaires from which the

data for the current study were generated were distributed both in the work place and in the teacher training setting (the university). Their study (Sigler and Wilson, 1988) sought to determine whether occupational stress among police officers was greater than occupational stress among teachers. It also sought to determine differences among patterns of stressors within each group. In the light of comparison with Sigler and Wilson's study, one of the shortcomings of the present study was that it had no control group at all, and that it relied singularly upon questionnaires that were paired between the actual school setting and the marital environment. Sigler and Wilson's findings had a .45 correlation to the current study.

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